

DESERT GOLD

by ZANE GREY Author of Riders of the Purple Sage, Wildfire, Etc.



Illustrations by Irwin Myers

The fugitives were entering a desolate, burned-out world. The waste of sand began to yield to clinders. The horses sank to their fetlocks as they toiled on. A fine, choking dust blew back from the leaders, and men coughed and horses snorted. But the sun was now behind the hills. In between ran the stream of lava. It was broken, sharp, dull rust color, full of cracks and caves and crevices, and everywhere upon its jagged surface grew the white-thorned choya.

Again twilight encompassed the travelers. But there was still light enough for Gale to see the constricted passage open into a wide, deep space where the dull color was relieved by the gray of gnarled and dwarfed mesquite. Blanco Sol, keenest of scent, whistled his welcome herald of water. The other horses answered, quickened their gait. Gale smelled it, too, sweet, cool, damp on the dry air.

Yaqui turned the corner of a pocket in the lava wall. The file of white horses rounded the corner after him. And Gale, coming last, saw the pale, glancing gleam of a pool of water beautiful in the twilight.

Next day the Yaqui's relentless driving demand on the horses was no longer in evidence. He lost no time, but he did not hasten. His course wound between low cinder dunes which limited their view of the surrounding country. These dunes finally sank down to a black floor as hard as flint, with tongues of lava to the left, and to the right the slow descent into the cactus plain. Yaqui was now traveling due west. It was Gale's idea that the Indian was skirting the first sharp-toothed slope of a vast volcanic plateau which formed the western half of the Sonora desert and extended to the Gulf of California. Travel was slow, but not exhausting for rider or beast.

Thirty miles of easy stages brought the fugitives to another waterhole, a little round pocket under the heaved-up edge of lava. There was sparse, short, bleached grass for the horse, but no wood for a fire. This night there were question and reply, conjecture, doubt, opinion and conviction expressed by the men of the party. But the Indian, who alone could have told where they were, where they were going, what chance they had to escape, maintained his stoical silence. Gale took the early watch, Ladd the midnight one, and Lash that of the morning. The day broke rosy, glorious, cold as ice. Action was necessary to make useful numb hands and feet. Mercedes was fed while yet wrapped in blankets.

It was a significant index to the day's travel that Yaqui should keep a blanket from the pack and tear it into strips to bind the legs of the horses. It meant the dreaded choya



Mercedes Must Ride; but the Others Must Walk.

and the knife-edged lava. That Yaqui did not mount Diablo was still more significant. Mercedes must ride; but the others must walk.

The Indian led off into one of the gray notches between the tumbled streams of lava. At the apex of the notch, where two streams met, a narrow gully wound and ascended. Yaqui led Diablo into it, and then began the most laborious and vexatious and painful of all slow travel.

The disintegrating surface of a lava bed was at once the roughest, the hardest, the meanest, the cruellest, the most deceitful kind of ground to travel. The fugitives made slow progress. They picked a cautious, winding way to and fro in little steps here and there along the many twists of the trail, up and down the unyieldable depressions, round and round the holes. At noon, so winding back upon itself had been their course, they appeared to have come only a short dis-

and men. Without a word he handed the glass to Ladd. The ranger used it, muttering to himself.

"They're on the lava fifteen miles down in an air line," he said, presently. "Jim, shore they're twice that an' more accordin' to the trail."

Jim had his look and replied: "I reckon we're a day an' a night in the lead."

"Is it Rojas?" burst out Thorne with set jaw.

"Yes, Thorne. It's Rojas and a dozen or more," replied Gale, and he looked up at Mercedes.

She was transformed. She might have been a medieval princess embodying all the Spanish power and passion of that time, breathing revenge, hate, unquenchable spirit of fire. If her beauty had been wonderful in her helpless and appealing moments, now, when she looked back white-faced and flame-eyed, it was transcendent.

Gale drew a long, deep breath. The mood which had presaged pursuit, strife, blood on this somber desert, returned to him tenfold. He saw Thorne's face corded by black veins, and his teeth exposed like those of a snarling wolf. These rangers, who had coolly risked death many times, and had dealt it often, were white as no fear or pain could have made them. Then, on the moment, Yaqui raised his hand, not clenched or doubled tight, but curled rigid like an eagle's claw; and he shook it in a strange, slow gesture which was menacing and terrible.

It was the woman that called to the depths of these men. And their passion to kill and to save was surpassed only by the wild hate which was yet love, the unfathomable emotion of a peon slave. Gale marveled at it, while he felt his whole being cold and tense, as he turned once more to follow in the tracks of his leaders. The fight predicted by Belding was at hand. What a fight that must be! Rojas was traveling light and fast. He was gaining. He had bought his men with gold, with extravagant promises, per lips with offers of the body and blood of an aristocrat hateful to their kind. Lastly, there was the wild, desolate environment, a tortured wilderness of jagged lava and poisoned choya, a lonely, fierce and repellent world, a red stage most somberly and fittingly colored for a supreme struggle between men.

Yaqui looked back no more. Mercedes looked back no more. But the other looked, and the time came when Gale saw the creeping line of pursuers with naked eyes.

A level line above marked the rim of the plateau. Sand began to show in the little lava pits. On and upward tolled the cavalcade, still very slowly advancing. At last Yaqui reached the rim. He stood with his hand on Blanco Diablo; and both were silhouetted against the sky. That was the outlook for a Yaqui. And his great nose, dazzlingly white in the sunlight, with head wildly and proudly erect, mane and tail flying in the wind, made a magnificent picture. The others toiled on and upward, and at last Gale led Blanco Sol over the rim. Then all looked down the red slope.

But shadows were gathering there and no moving line could be seen.

Yaqui mounted and wheeled Diablo away. The others followed. The Yaqui led them into a zone of craters. The top of the earth seemed to have been blown out in holes from a few rods in width to large craters, some shallow, others deep, and all red as fire. Yaqui circled close to abysses which yawned sheer from a level surface, and he appeared always to be turning upon his course to avoid them.

The plateau had now a considerable dip to the west. Gale marked the slow heave and ripple of the ocean of lava to the south, where high, rounded peaks marked the center of this volcanic region. The uneven nature of the slope westward prevented any extended view, until suddenly the fugitives emerged from a rugged break to come upon a sublime and awe-inspiring spectacle.

They were upon a high point of the western slope of the plateau. It was strange to Gale, and perhaps to the others, to see their guide lead Diablo into a smooth and well-worn trail along the rim of the awful crater. Gale looked down into that red chasm. It resembled an inferno. The dark cliffs upon the opposite side were veiled in blue haze that seemed like smoke. Here Yaqui was at home. He moved and looked about him as a man coming at last into his own. Gale saw him stop and gaze out over that red-ribbed void to the Gulf.

Gale divined that somewhere along this crater of hell the Yaqui would make his final stand; and one look into his strange, inscrutable eyes made imagination picture a fitting doom for the pursuing Rojas.

When an American offered the Passion players of Oberammergau a million dollars for the privilege of filming the Passion Play without a change in cast, the players sacrificed their locks and saved their self-respect and honor. Owing to the depreciation of the mark, the temptation to a sacred tradition was great. Long's philosophy is that riches do not bring contentment and happiness, two assets the players now possess.

(To Be Continued.)

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—Fingerprints are now sent by radio by means of the Beilin system.

—Marion Talley, aged 15, the daughter of a telegraph operator of the Missouri Pacific Railroad, is an American vocal prodigy, according to the decision of the directors of the Metropolitan Opera Company. She is to study for four years before attempting seriously to become a great artist.

—President Harding broke White House records of several months standing when he shook hands with 1,400 persons in a recent reception.

SHE KEEPS BUCYRUS DRY.



Her name is Miss Georgia Hopley and Bucyrus is in Ohio. Miss Hopley is said to be the only woman prohibition agent in the United States.

FOR SICK MASONS.

Plans Being Made to Build Tuberculosis Hospitals.

"Establishment of a chain of sanatoria throughout the United States for members of the Masonic order suffering from tuberculosis—the whole enterprise to involve an estimated expenditure of \$12,500,000 for construction and the care of 5,000 sufferers with an annual expenditure of \$5,000,000 for operation will be recommended to the Masonic Grand Lodge of Texas at its annual meeting at Waco on December 5, 6 and 7 by the tuberculosis sanatoria commission of the grand lodges of Texas, Arizona and New Mexico.

This is a commission appointed by the grand masters of the three states named, under authority of resolutions adopted by the grand lodges to prepare a plan for the establishment of tuberculosis sanatoria, for the care of consumptive Masons who come to the southwest seeking restoration to health. These resolutions were adopted at the last meeting of the respective grand lodges.

Robert J. Newton, of San Antonio, chairman of the tri-state commission, made the following statement about its work and recommendations:

"The National Tuberculosis association, estimates that there are 4,700 deaths among any group of 2,500,000 males, 20 years of age and older, from tuberculosis annually. The latest reports show a total Masonic population of 2,650,000 in this country, and of this number more than 5,000 die of tuberculosis every year.

"It is estimated that there are nine living cases for every death, but this is a very conservative estimate. There is every reason to believe that there are more than 50,000 living cases of tuberculosis among the Masons of the United States.

"How many of them need the help of their brethren in their fight for life no one can say. Many of them, if given hospital care and treatment would recover and be able to resume support of their wives and children. Many die because they lack the money for san-

atorium care. And the pity of it is that the fraternity then spends more for the care of the widow and orphan than it would have cost to save the father.

"The commission will recommend the establishment of a chain of sanatoria around the country, with a total of 5,000 beds, one of these institutions to be built in western Texas, one in New Mexico, one in Arizona, one in California, one in Colorado, in order to secure the benefit of the different altitudes and different climatic conditions. Instead of centering them all in one position. There will be one in the Asheville section of North Carolina, which is a resort for tubercular patients, and one will be located in the Saranac Lake region in New York, another locality famous for cures of that dread disease. There will also be an institution located in the middle west, convenient to the large centers of population, and one in either North or South Dakota, and in the Pacific northwest.

—Lancaster December 22: Alleging a conspiracy among the defendants to wreck and ruin him financially, socially and professionally, Charles D. Jones of Lancaster, today filed an action for damages in the court of common pleas here in the sum of one million dollars against Leroy Springs, John T. Stevens, H. R. Rice and William J. Shecter, national bank examiner. The bill of complaint was placed in the hands of Sheriff Hunter, and will be served on Springs, Stevens and Rice immediately and on Shecter as soon as he can be located in the state. The bill of complaint in the court of common pleas here, and is divided into many allegations. The chief features of these allegations are that Jones charges that the defendants entered into a conspiracy to wreck and ruin him and that Shecter entered into an agreement with Springs, Stevens and Rice to give confidential information about the plaintiff in his examination into the affairs of the First National bank,

GETTING MEASURED FOR THE SPEAKER'S CHAIR.



Mrs. Winifred Mason Huck, whose father, the late William E. Mason, was both United States Senator and Representative from Illinois, is seen here occupying for the moment the Speaker's chair in the House. She was elected to Congress from Chicago last month to take the seat of her father. She is the third woman to be sent to Congress, the first being Jeannette Rankin and the second "Aunt" Alice Robertson.

of Lancaster of which Jones is president. The complaint alleges that the bank examiner's report was fabricated of falsehoods and was drawn in a conspiracy with the defendants. Further allegations in Mr. Jones' complaint are that in the trial here last March before Judge Bowman, Shecter certified falsely against him. It is generally understood here that all these charges will be specifically and vigorously denied by the defendants.

—The big six-story Trust building in the 200 block of South Tryon street, Charlotte, was destroyed by fire Sunday morning. The Piedmont building and the Brockman building near by were also severely damaged. The loss is estimated as between \$350,000 and \$400,000.

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